

Is there Life on Mars? Well, as of this past week there is at least water. (See- http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/phoenix/news/phoenix-20080731.html)

This however does not prove that life exists or ever existed on Mars. It basically means that it life forms could now exist, or could have in the past, or might in the future. Any of these possibilities may be long shots. So the search for extra terrestrial life continues.

However just in case we get lucky:

Social Perspectives

I realize that social issues or aspects of Life on Mars is probably not a top priority or even an after-thought for some however I would like to pose a few interdisciplinary questions. Why interdisciplinary, because the social construction of knowledge in all its forms, requires us to consider ethical questions as well as empirical ones? With this thought in mind, I ask;

- 1.) If we should find life on Mars, what will we do with it? Fact is we are already there. So what now? Our presence on mars is impacting now. Think Einstein. We cannot ignore the role we are playing. No matter how hard we try and no matter how good our systems of planetary protection are, we are going to change the environment in Mars to some extent. We are going to transfer more than just equipment. Will our planetary protection measures be adequate for protecting the planets we visit and our own when we return?
- 2.) What are the possible ramifications of our actions? Well obviously the human race is spreading its wings and that's exciting. My concern though is that we are not considering all of the possible consequences and so will continue a legacy of 'acceptable loss' policy as we venture out into the Universe. What is an acceptable loss when it comes to meeting new life-forms? Yes, I realize that it may be awhile before we actually find proof of the smallest micro-organism, however thinking positive, as is my way, I want to be prepared for a visit from other worlds. We need to consider these issues in more depth.

One last thought

Have you ever wondered how we can justify investing in such outer space missions when people are starving? It's a tough question but have a look a NASA City to find out how the results from some missions have impacted our daily lives. You may be surprised.

<http://www.nasa.gov/topics/nasalife/index.html>

Leornian Naidoo
Second Life/ OU Science Discussion Group
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OU Links:

Centre for Earth, Planetary, Space & Astronomical Research

<http://cepsar.open.ac.uk/>

Science at the OU

<http://www.open.ac.uk/science/>

Interesting links:

NASA Mars Exploration project

<http://marsrovers.nasa.gov/home/index.html>

The Robotic Alliance Project

<http://robotics.nasa.gov/>

ESA

<http://www.esa.int/esaCP/index.html>

ESA ExoMars

<http://www.esa.int/esaMI/ExoMars/index.html>

Science & Technology, Facilities Council

<http://www.scitech.ac.uk/>